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City To Purchase Substation, Put New Law on the Books

For Immediate Release
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(August 2, 2004- TROY)- Mayor Harry Tutunjian made two announcements Monday morning, reinforcing the City's Community Police Department, as well as providing new legislation following a homicide last month in South Troy.

The first announcement is that the City will purchase the South Troy Substation from its current owner following City Council approval on Thursday. In the end it is a deal which the City will pay less than \$40,000. Tutunjian said Monday this reaffirms both the City and his intentions to see Community Police become a success. The City will pay \$48,500 for the building, and the owner will then pay back taxes on the property lowering the price by an additional \$10,000.

"The advantages of this move are twofold," Tutunjian said. "First, we will outright own the building. We will no longer have to pay rent, or worry about negotiating leases. In fact, after four years, the rent money we would have given to the owner would already pay for the building. Secondly, this sends a message to all of our neighborhoods, and more importantly criminals, that we are serious about improving the safety of our City."

Perhaps the best part of the purchase, according to Tutunjian, is that the money for the property will come from unused Community Development Block Grant monies from previous years.

"We are able to make this purchase with no real additional burden to the taxpayers," Tutunjian said. "We have found leftover CDBG monies from previous years, and we will use that to purchase this property. The situation is a clear win-win."

City Councilman Bob Armet, I- at-large, is the chairman of the Public Safety Committee. Armet called the move to purchase the building "excellent."

"It's a step in the right direction, and it looks like a free building when you look at the math," Armet said. "We will then have ownership of the building and have the ability to make the corrections that need to be made."

Tutunjian also announced legislation he believes will keep the City safer. The City Council will introduce a Local Law at its meeting this week that will mandate convenience stores to close between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. Last month, the City's first homicide of the year took place outside of a convenience store around 1 a.m. Last week, Troy Police made an arrest in the case.

“I am a very pro-business person, but I am also very pro-neighborhood. It has become clear to me that there is no need for these types of stores to remain open throughout the night,” Tutunjian said. “Many people conduct business in a law abiding manner at these stores. However, for the safety of all people in Troy, I believe this law is necessary.”

The law is structured so that large grocery chains, such as Price Chopper and Hannaford, as well as large gas stations, such as Hess on Hoosick Street, will be allowed to remain open. The new law, if passed, dictates that stores having less than 1,500 square feet of interior operating space, or having less than 6 operable gas pumps, must close from midnight to 5 a.m. Councilwoman Karen Messick, R- at-large, is pleased with the law and is hoping for unanimous support from her fellow council members.

“It is clear that something needs to be done about these stores, which stay open throughout the entire night with questionable intentions,” Messick said. “We need to put our foot down, and I hope that the entire council will vote yes with me in approving this new local law.”

Because the legislation is a law, the Council must introduce it this week. The Council will then have a public hearing and likely vote on the law in September. Tutunjian said since the homicide occurred last month he has received many requests from neighborhoods to do something about the stores.

“Many people in the City believe that these places remain open, and it is not in case someone needs a quart of milk at 3 a.m.,” Tutunjian said. “Our goal in this City is to make residents as safe as possible, but also to have them feel safe. Hopefully this legislation will do just that.”